



## ACT Government

# 2002-2003 BUDGET

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### **BUDGET SUPPORT FOR CANBERRA'S OLDER PEOPLE**

Older Canberrans will benefit from the 2002-03 ACT Budget through a range of initiatives addressing health, accommodation needs and transport, Chief Minister Jon Stanhope said.

“The Government is committed to creating an inclusive community, one in which older people feel safe and valued, and in which adequate services are available for their needs,” Mr Stanhope said.

“Older people often have special needs, and it is important that the Government recognises and addresses them. For example, many older people have medical problems – they are major users of health services.

“The Government committed in the lead-up to the 2001 election to developing a step down facility to assist the return home of patients with special convalescent needs. We are providing \$2.49 million over four years for a convalescent care service to support people following an acute hospital episode. This step down facility will address an identified gap in the provision of health and support services for the community and will be of great benefit to older people.

“This initiative will build on the Morling Lodge Transitional Care Unit, opened by the Chief Minister in November 2001, to ensure that it optimises the outcomes for elderly people when they return home from hospital.”

The Chief Minister said a further \$314,000 over four years will go towards expanding hospice services at Claire Holland House, providing a hospice of 19 beds.

“This is the first expansion of hospice services since the establishment of the hospice. The expansion will support the growth in demand for hospice services and will allow the ACT to continue to provide a range of options to support people in need of palliative care services,” he said.

“A review of the Government’s carers policy and existing legislation will be undertaken to ensure that it meets the needs of carers.

“We will spend \$4.568 million over four years on enhancing all areas of respite care, including support for people with challenging behaviours.

“A further \$1.337 million over four years will go towards employing additional mental health clinicians to expand the Older Persons’ Mental Health Service. This will provide a comprehensive community-based psychiatry service, including clinical management, neuro-psychological assessments and short-term psychotherapy.

Media Release



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The budget also allocates \$1.2 million over four years to provide care and support for clients with dementia-related challenging behaviours. This will allow specialist care to be provided in the ACT to reduce the need for clients to travel interstate.

“The 2002-03 also allocates over \$600,000 over the next four years to provide additional support for people with cancer and their carers.

“The Government is committing an additional \$2.51 million over four years to increase support services for frail aged people and younger people with a disability. The 2002-03 ACT Budget provides an additional \$629,000 in recurrent funding for the joint Commonwealth/ACT Home and Community Care Program, which helps support clients in their home or the community.”

The Chief Minister said access to affordable housing and accommodation is another area of importance for older people.

“Older people need a range of accommodation options. In particular, the Government recognises that public housing policies must address the needs of older people,” Mr Stanhope said.

“The Government is continuing the Accessible Units Program to provide suitable dwellings in public housing for older tenants. The program, which commenced in 2001-02, will provide 200 accessible units by 31 December 2005.

“In addition, the Older Women’s Boarding House will provide eight independent living units for women aged 55 and over who have experienced family breakdown or elder abuse and who have exited a supported accommodation assistance program (SAAP) service. There is an emerging need among older women for safe and affordable accommodation, and only limited options available for them.”

The Chief Minister said that changes to public transport in the budget would be of assistance to older people as social isolation is often a major problem for older people, especially if they cannot drive or do not have access to a car.

“Funding is being provided to progressively replace ACTION’s ageing bus fleet with low floor, wheelchair accessible buses. In addition, funding has been provided for a simple and more equitable flat fare structure for public transport,” he said.

“The ACT Library Service also plays an important role in supporting older people with mobility problems through its home lending services. The Government is developing a long-term five-year strategy that will identify the products and services that ACT libraries will deliver to meet the needs of older Canberrans.”

Mr Stanhope said the Government’s program of initiatives to assist Canberra’s older people will be undertaken in close consultation with the recently established Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing, the first of its kind since the introduction of self-government to the Territory.

“The Council will have a broad focus. It will provide advice to the Government about the priorities for older Canberrans, and advice on issues such as positive attitudes towards ageing and older people, housing, accommodation, life-long learning, mature age employment and provision of services for older people,” he said.

**Statement ends 25 June 2002**